

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Local Union 457 AFL-CIO



2590 Berlin Turnpike
Suite 1
Berlin, CT 06037
Telephone: (860) 505-0948
Fax No: (860) 505-8859

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Good Afternoon. I'm John Fernandes, Business Manager of IBEW Local 457 representing workers at Connecticut Light & Power. I previously testified before this body on this issue back in 2012. I will resubmit that testimony but I can say the issue of staffing has only gotten worse at CL&P since that previous testimony. There has been a continual loss of craft positions since this merger.

After ratification of our last contract back in early 2013 the reduction has escalated.

Our current numbers are as follows:

Overall we are down 112 positions at CL&P from 581 in 2012 to 469 currently. The larger craft positions, Linemen, Electricians, and Cable Splicers account for 75 of the 112 lost positions. That's a 21% reduction of the workers who directly turn the power on. The other 37 positions that we've lost are support positions that also have an impact on storm restoration.

If the Company is allowed to erode the workforce in this fashion what will be left a few short years down the road?

What is long overdue is legislation that will require CL&P to maintain a minimum staffing level so that every little windstorm doesn't become a crisis for the State of Connecticut. I have heard that the State can't tell businesses how to run but there are plenty of examples of legislation doing just that. You write the law and it gives PURA the power to see that it's followed, which is to say there must be penalties if the requirements are not met.

In closing, these things were never an issue when the business was regulated. Since 1998 what we've seen is an attempt to create competition through deregulation. We now have fewer but much larger utilities nationally. That said, this part of the business, poles and wires, is still regulated so it's time to strengthen that regulation.

Thank you,

John Fernandes
Business Manager
IBEW Local 457

Enc: 2012 Testimony

Testimony-R.H.B. 5509 An Act Concerning Staffing Levels for Electric Service Lineworkers
State of Connecticut Energy and Technology Committee

Good morning. I'm John Fernandes and I am President of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 457 in Meriden, CT representing workers at the Connecticut Light & Power Company in the Eastern portion of CT as well as Utility workers at the municipalities of Norwich and Wallingford.

As raised bill #5544 currently reads it refers to minimum staffing based on the ratio of linemen to the number of customers served, but it can be interpreted to read as scaling up for storms; that it's a reference for the number of crews that may be needed in the State to address a potential storm.

We propose the number must be set for the daily operation of the utility so that you have a clear benchmark and from that point you can drive up in the event of a storm.

After the fall storms in CT the various panels and investigations that were commissioned consistently found that the municipalities performed better than the utilities and that was based on the fact that the ratio of linemen to customers served was lower in the municipalities vs. the utilities.

I testified to that fact in September before the Governor's two storm panel with supporting documentation¹ and in fact Boston University did a study on the same storms that was part of a review of the proposed merger between NU and NStar and their findings were the same². I see

¹ CL&P Area	# of Linemen	Population	Customer ratio to Linemen
Hartford	17	314,400	18,494 to 1
Middletown	12	91,320	7,610 to 1
East Hampton	16	98,178	6,136 to 1
Willimantic	14	103,180	7,370 to 1
New London	11	92,951	8,450 to 1
Mystic	10	88,460	8,846 to 1
Cheshire	30	321,929	10,730 to 1
Tolland	25	176,063	7,042 to 1
Danielson	15	124,382	8,292 to 1
Madison	17	116,312	6,841 to 1
Municipalities	# of Linemen	Population	Customer ratio to Linemen
Norwich	10	40,493	4,049 to 1
Wallingford	14	52,135	3,723 to 1

CL&P total district linemen represented by LU 457 is 167 for 1,527,476 customers which leaves a ratio of 1 lineman to 9,146 customers, whereas the municipalities have a ratio of 1 lineman to 3,859 customers.

These staffing levels were bases on 2010/2011 numbers which have gone down since then and the population numbers were from the 2010 census.

² From the NECIR article by Scott Van Voorhis:

- A quadrupling of major power outages in Massachusetts over the past five years as major outages, once somewhat rare, have become annual outages.
- Too few front-line repair crews at the major power companies to avoid prolonged outages after large storms.
- Growing concerns over whether the state's electric grid is being adequately maintained, from aging infrastructure to overgrown trees looming over lines.

this bill along with the Governor's bill uses this same measure, everyone uses the same equation but no one plugs in the numbers.

For the municipalities that we represent the ratio is approximately 1 lineworker for every 4,000 customers. For the 10 CL&P districts we represent the best ratio is 1 lineworker for every 6,136 customers and the worst is here in Hartford where it is 1 lineworker for every 18,494

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- In a key indicator of potential trouble, the region's major utilities are understaffed when it comes to having enough linemen and other front-line workers to deal with major storms, the NECIR investigation found.
 - The state's top three power companies, National Grid, NStar and Western Massachusetts Electric have on average 3 or fewer linemen for every 10,000 people in their service areas.
 - By contrast, the average is closer to four linemen at 11 town and city owned power companies surveyed by NECIR, with some towns employing five or even six linemen for every 10,000 residents.
 - The municipal utilities were bright spots in an otherwise darkened landscape during the big outages last year, getting their customers' lights back on, in some cases in hours, even as it took the major power companies up to a week to do.
 - The ability to put more boots on the ground quickly safeguarded town-owned power companies from prolonged outages, industry watchdogs and managers at some of these utilities said.
 - There have been eight major power outages in Massachusetts since 2007, with winter storms being the major culprit, reports filed with the U.S. Department of Energy indicate. All involved the state's big electric companies. By contrast, there were only two major outages- defined as more than 50,000 homes and businesses losing power- during the previous five-year period, 2001-2006.
 - "We are never out for several days," said Robert Jolly, general manager of Marblehead's municipal utility, which has nine linemen to cover a town with just under 20,000 residents. "I can't ever recall being out for several days."
 - By contrast, with not enough linemen of their own to respond to big, regional storms, the major power companies were forced to rely heavily during last years' storms on contract repair crews- some from as far away as the Sunbelt states and Canada. Despite that extra manpower, it took more than a week- in some areas- to restore power.
 - "They (the major power companies) are gambling with the weather and they gambled and they lost," said Rep. Daniel Winslow, (R-Norfolk), who has proposed legislation that would result in rebates for customers stuck without power for days on end.
 - Passing the buck on storm costs.
 - While acknowledging frustration on the part customers over the outages, NStar- which serves a large portion of eastern Massachusetts- contends it did a good job getting the lights back on.
 - At the height of "Snowtober" storm, 1.4 million people were without power across New England, federal stats show.
 - "I honestly think we did a very good job in these storms," said Craig Hallstrom, vice president of electric field operations of NStar. "They were historic sized storms."
 - But the Massachusetts Municipal Association, which represents communities statewide that bore the brunt of the outages, takes a very different view.
 - "That's baloney. The end result was a real collapse," MMA Executive Director Geoff Beckwith said.
 - Last years' outages were among the worst yet in Massachusetts, rivaling even a brutal December 2008 ice storm and triggering huge costs that eventually could be passed on to rate payers.
 - NStar's bill for the two fall storms topped \$48 million, a company spokesman said.
 - But National Grid's expenses were double to triple that, ranging as high as \$100 million to \$120 million, said Deborah Drew, a spokeswoman for the utility.
 - Western Massachusetts Electric's (WMECO) costs add up to another \$23 million, pushing the total for all three companies to at least \$160 million and possibly as high as \$190 million.
 - The costs for National Grid and WMECO were significantly higher than those incurred in the 2008 ice storm.
 - Bad weather or just corporate bean counting?

customers. Overall for the 10 CL&P districts we represent it works out to 1 lineman for every 9,146 customers, which is more than double of what we have in our municipalities.

I'm not suggesting doubling the number of linemen at CL&P. I recognize there are support staff that help bring the ratio down, but an increase of 25- 30% from the current level would help ease the stress on the districts. Additionally, there should be an integrated attrition plan that's part of any benchmarking so that this doesn't become a perpetual problem.

Currently the workforce is supplemented with outside contractors for which the utility is paying a premium for on a weekly basis. As an example, even with the current level of contractors on site, which CL&P is paying 60 hours per week with overtime to have them on retainer, on the weekend of February 25, 2012 with the prediction of high winds, CL&P made a call for additional support from contractors over 1K miles away, in addition to all the CL&P lineworkers that were put on-call. The winds never came but that bill had to be paid. Obviously that way of doing business can't be sustained. It's reactive and not financially prudent. The rate payers can't afford that way of doing business.

After reviewing the analysis of the Governor's two storm panel as well as the multiple independent storm reviews a new term of art has risen to the surface. The utility has been told they need to "lean forward" relative to storm performance.

In light of that analysis, I propose that they be told to not lean forward but instead take a giant step forward- hire the appropriate number of full-time workers. That would displace contract workers, create CT jobs and would put them in a better position to deal with storms which have always been an issue on a small scale, never mind the larger events that we saw last fall.

On behalf of our membership I thank you for consideration in these matters.